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STATE FOR INL, INR/R/MR, NEA/IR

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TAGS: KMDR KPAO OPRC PTER CI IZ

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - IRAQ

¶1. On March 22, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, "El Mercurio" (circ. 116,807) carried a column by Karin Ebensperger entitled, "The Iraqi Swamp." Quote:

¶2. "On the day President Bush invaded Iraq I publicly criticized his decision. It seemed to me that after the terrible attack on the Twin Towers the last thing to do was to create enemies in the Muslim world.... Three years later, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced that the Bush administration is preparing for a 'long war' and admits that terrorism is a complex threat that cannot be resolved in the short term or with a military invasion. Incredible. It took President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld 35,000 deaths and more than 2,000 American lives...to realize what many European leaders, journalists and experts considered obvious.... President Bush has problems understanding the international system and the array of elements that interact therein: a true statesman can determine the general context in which he will act and the possible repercussions only if he has thorough knowledge of the world and its cultural diversity."

YAMAUCHI